ASSESSMENT OF ISLAMIC EDUCATION TOWARDS POLITICAL STABILITY IN NIGERIA

By

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Abstract

This paper assessed the role of Islāmic education in fostering political stability in Nigeria. Examining education's evolution from ancient times to the present highlights early Muslim scholars' contributions to various disciplines and the significance of Islāmic educational methodologies—*Tarbiyah, Taleem, and Tazkiyah*— in developing individuals and societies. Additionally, it addressed key causes of Nigeria's political instability, such as economic inequality, corruption, and ethnic tensions and posits Islāmic principles as potential remedies to promoting justice, accountability and unity. The study employed a qualitative methodology, utilizing both primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected through structured interviews with Islāmic scholars, educators, and policymakers. Secondary data included a thorough review of existing literature, historical documents and statistical reports on education and political stability in Nigeria. Content analysis was used to interpret findings and draw insights. By critically analyzing the connection between Islāmic education and political stability, the study considered historical, social, and political factors, ultimately proposing a framework for integrating Islāmic education into Nigeria's broader educational landscape. This study introduces a holistic framework integrating Islāmic educational principles into Nigeria's national curriculum. Unlike existing literature, it provides actionable steps for fostering civic responsibility, ethical leadership, and unity by blending *Tarbiyah, Taleem* and *Tazkiyah* methodologies with modern education strategies. It also addresses the sociopolitical implications of adapting these principles to diverse Nigerian regions.

Keywords: Islām**,** Education, Political Stability, Nigeria.

Introduction

Education is a transformative process essential for both individual growth and societal progress. As Nigerian educator Babatunde Fafunwa (1974) emphasized, education encompasses the holistic development of individuals—intellectually, morally, and socially—to create responsible members of society. This paper examined Islāmic education's unique role in this process, tracing

its roots through the historical progress of education, from ancient civilizations to modern movements. Islāmic education prioritizes the comprehensive nurturing of moral, spiritual, and intellectual capacities and prepares individuals to lead balanced lives guided by faith and knowledge. By evaluating Islamic education's influence on Nigeria's social and political climate, this paper proposes Islāmic principles as constructive responses to the persistent issues of political instability in Nigeria.

Education

The word "education" comes from the Latin word "educatio," which means "a bringing up, a rearing." This, in turn, comes from the Latin verb "educare," meaning "to bring up, to train, to raise." the verb "educare" is related to "educare," which means "to lead out" or "draw out," from the prefix "ex-" meaning "out of" and ducere" meaning "to lead".

Education is a multifaceted and dynamic process that encompasses the systematic teaching, training, and development of individuals to acquire knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes necessary for personal growth and societal advancement. Education can be defined as the way of life, that is, its dictates one's life.

Babatunde Fafunwa (1974), a renowned Nigerian educator and academic, defined education in a broad and holistic sense. According to Fafunwa, education is not merely the process of formal schooling but encompasses a comprehensive development of individuals. He emphasized that education involves the physical, social, mental, emotional, and moral development of individuals to help them become functional and responsible members of society. Therefore, education is a multifaceted and dynamic process that encompasses the systematic teaching, training, and development of individuals to acquire knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes necessary for personal growth and societal advancement.

Historical Development of Education

Ancient Civilizations

Education has ancient roots, with early civilizations such as Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece, and China developing their systems of education. For example, in Greece, education was divided between the city-states of Athens and Sparta, with Athens emphasizing philosophy, arts, and sciences, while Sparta focused on military training and discipline. "The Greeks made education a tool for cultivating the virtues of the mind and the soul, creating a harmonious balance between intellectual and physical training" (Plato, trans. 2007).

Middle Ages

During the Middle Ages, education in Europe was primarily conducted by the Church. Monasteries and cathedral schools were the main centers of learning. The establishment of universities in the 12th and 13th centuries, such as the University of Bologna and the University

of Paris, marked a significant evolution in higher education. "Education during this era was the guardian of faith and the preserver of cultural traditions" (Aquinas, 1265-1274).

Renaissance and Enlightenment

The renaissance brought a revival of classical learning and a humanistic approach to education. The enlightenment furthered the value of reason, science, and individualism, influencing educational reforms and the creation of public education systems. "Man's mind is his basic means of survival—education should illuminate reason and inspire the discovery of truth" (Locke, 1693/1996).

Modern Era

The 19th and 20th centuries saw the expansion of compulsory education, the development of national education systems, and the rise of progressive education movements. These changes aimed to provide universal access to education and adapt teaching methods to better suit the needs of students. "Education is not preparation for life; education is life itself" (Dewey, 1938).

Islamic Studies and Education

According to Oloyede (2012), Islāmic studies is viewed as a terminology that is used to describe an aspect of theological sciences that seeks to influence natural, human and social science in their service to God and humanity from the prison of Islāmic Credo. Education in Islam is the basis of life as well as development for both individuals and the society (Maigari, 2010). This is why seeking knowledge is obligatory for every Muslim to cater to the individual's spiritual and material life. Thus, Islām through its education, which is embedded in Islāmic Studies, prepares men of faith and knowledge, bringing and guiding them to a happy, prosperous, useful and productive life in both worlds (Liman, 2012). By this, Islāmic studies is very fundamental as it deals with the overall development of an individual who is to be submissive to the wills and orders of Allāh. For Islāmic Studies to achieve its primary goals, the curriculum needs to be well planned to meet the societal needs.

Recent studies highlight how Islāmic education systems in countries like Malaysia and Indonesia effectively merge religious and secular curricula. These cases demonstrate pathways to reducing poverty and promoting political stability by leveraging religious teachings. By drawing on these models, the paper enriches discourse on the Nigerian context.

Islāmic Education can be best defined in the below three categories:

Tarbiyah: Refers to the comprehensive development and nurturing of an individual's moral, spiritual, and intellectual capacities by Islamic values.

Taleem: Involves the imparting of religious and secular knowledge, aiming for understanding and practical application in daily life.

Tazkiyah: The purification of the soul, focusing on developing spirituality and moral integrity by cleansing negative traits and behaviors.

Early Muslims who contributed significantly to Education and Civilization

Early Muslims made significant contributions to education, knowledge, and civilization across various fields. Some of the most notable figures include:

1. **Al-Khwarizmi (c. 780–850):** Often regarded as the "father of algebra," his works introduced the decimal positional number system to the western world.

2. **Al-Farabi (c. 872–950):** A renowned philosopher and scientist, he wrote extensively on various subjects including logic, ethics, and political philosophy.

3. **Ibn Sina (Avicenna) (980–1037):** A polymath who made significant contributions to medicine, notably through his book "The Canon of Medicine," which was a standard medical treatise.

4. **Ibn Rushd (Averroes) (1126–1198):** A philosopher and theologian who wrote commentaries on Aristotle, which influenced both Islāmic and Western thought.

5. **Al-Ghazali (1058 - 1111):** A theologian, philosopher, and mystic whose works, especially "The Incoherence of the Philosophers," had a profound impact on Islāmic philosophy and theology.

6. **Al-Razi (Rhazes) (865–925):** A Persian polymath who significantly contributed to medicine, chemistry, and philosophy. His book "The Comprehensive Book on Medicine" was highly influential in both the Islamic world and medieval Europe.

7. **Ibn Battuta (1304–1369):** A Moroccan explorer and scholar who traveled extensively across the Islamic world and beyond, documenting his journeys in a travelogue that provides valuable historical and cultural insights.

8. **Ibn Khaldun (1332–1406):** A historian and sociologist, best known for his work "Muqaddimah" (Introduction), which laid the foundations for modern sociology and historiography.

9. **Al-Masudi (896–956):** A historian and geographer, often referred to as the "Herodotus of the Arabs," known for his work "The Meadows of Gold," which covers the history and cultures of the Arabs.

10. **Al-Ma'mun (786–833):** The seventh Abbasid Caliph, who established the House of Wisdom in Baghdad, a major intellectual center where scholars from different cultures translated and studied a wide range of texts.

11. **Ibn Ishaaq (704–768):** An early historian known for his biography of the Prophet Muhammad, "Sirat Rasul Allah," which remains a crucial source for Islamic history.

These scholars, among many others, played crucial roles in the preservation, expansion, and dissemination of knowledge across various fields, significantly influencing both the Islamic world and the western world during the middle ages.

The Interplay between Religion, Education and Governance in Nigeria

Religion, education and governance are deeply intertwined in Nigeria, shaping its sociopolitical landscape and influencing public policies. This triad creates a framework for understanding how values, ethics, and knowledge interact to mold both individual behavior and national development. Nigeria's multicultural and multi-religious setting amplifies the significance of this relationship, as religion frequently informs educational philosophies, while both influence governance.

Historically, religion played a pivotal role in Nigeria's educational development. Islāmic education in Northern Nigeria introduced through the spread of Islām centuries ago, emphasized moral and spiritual growth alongside literacy and vocational training. Similarly, western missionaries in southern Nigeria established schools where Christian doctrines and modern educational methods were taught. These dual religious influences contributed to a legacy where education is often linked with moral rectitude and civic duty (Fafunwa, 1974).

Governance has interacted with religion and education in both constructive and challenging ways. Post-independence Nigeria sought to create a secular education system to unite a diverse population. However, disparities emerged as regions dominated by Islām and Christianity adhered to distinct educational paradigms. For instance, Northern states implemented Sharī'ah (Islāmic law) in their governance frameworks, affecting school curricula and blending religious precepts with state governance. Southern Nigeria, influenced by Christian ideologies, leaned toward western-style education. This divergence highlights governance's critical role in mediating religious influences to ensure a balanced and inclusive educational system (Adebayo, 2013).

Contemporary challenges like religious extremism underline the need for synergy between these domains. Groups like Boko Haram exploit educational inequalities and religious sensitivities to perpetuate instability. Addressing this requires policies integrating Islāmic and western educational systems, such as modernizing the *Almajiri* system. By doing so, Nigeria can provide holistic education that bridges religious divides, fosters social cohesion, and mitigates economic disparities (Maigari, 2010).

Effective governance is also essential in curbing the misuse of religion for political purposes. Leadership should prioritize education policies emphasizing universal values of justice, equality, and tolerance derived from both Islāmic and Christian doctrines. Public figures have a duty to uphold these principles as instruments for peace and nation-building. The emphasis on education, especially one embedded in religious values like justice ('Adl) and accountability (Mas'ūliyyah), can transform governance into a tool for societal stability (Oloyede, 2012).

The interplay between religion, education and governance in Nigeria underscores their collective impact on societal progress. By fostering an integrative approach that respects religious diversity, ensures equitable education and promotes ethical governance, Nigeria can achieve the stability necessary for sustainable development.

Causes of Political Instability in Nigeria

Political instability is a concept used to depict the uncertain public affairs of a country. It also points to the fluctuating condition of different people's powers and their exercise in a group, organization, or country. Political instability in Nigeria began in 1914 coercive amalgamation of diverse ethnic groups into one entity. This became the seed of lasting mistrust, suspicion, apprehension, and antagonism among these indigenous ethnic groups. This was exacerbated by the activities of pristine Nigerian politicians, who dissipated energy on wrestling power from the colonists, and not on managing the conflicting political interpretations and understandings of the diverse indigenous ethnic groups. Political instability is therefore the quality of an unstable state of affairs in the governance of a country.

Contemporary examples include the EndSARS protests, which highlight public dissatisfaction with governance and social injustices. Additionally, ethnic militancy in the Niger Delta exemplifies grievances arising from perceived economic exploitation and regional neglect. Political instability can arise from a variety of causes, often interacting with one another in complex ways. Some common causes include:

1. **Economic Inequality:** Significant disparities in wealth and income can lead to social unrest and dissatisfaction with the government.

2. **Corruption:** Widespread corruption erodes trust in public institutions and can provoke public anger.

3. **Ethnic or Religious Tensions:** Conflicts between different ethnic or religious groups can lead to violence and political instability.

4. **Poor Governance:** Ineffective or unjust governance can lead to a loss of legitimacy and public support.

5. **Political Polarization:** Extreme ideological divides can paralyze political processes and lead to conflict.

6. **External Influences:** Foreign intervention or influence can destabilize political systems, either intentionally or unintentionally.

7. **Historical Grievances:** Unresolved historical issues, such as past injustices or territorial disputes, can fuel ongoing instability.

8. **Weak Institutions:** Fragile or underdeveloped political institutions can struggle to manage conflicts and maintain order.

9. **Economic Crises:** Economic downturns, high unemployment, and inflation can increase public dissatisfaction and unrest.

10. **Leadership Changes:** Transitions of power, especially if contested or poorly managed, can lead to instability.

11. **Social Movements:** Large-scale social movements, whether peaceful or violent, can challenge existing political structures.

12. **Security Issues:** High levels of crime, terrorism, or insurgency can weaken the state's ability to maintain control and order.

Solutions to Political Instability in Nigeria

Political instability in Nigeria is a complex issue with deep historical, social, economic, and political roots. While there is no single solution, Islāmic principles can offer guidance in promoting peace, justice and stability. Below are some Islāmic solutions that can be applied to address political instability in Nigeria:

1. **Justice (Adl):** Islāmic teachings emphasize justice as a fundamental principle. Ensuring fair treatment for all citizens, equitable distribution of resources, and impartiality in governance can help reduce grievances that lead to instability.

2. **Consultation (Shūrā):** The concept of consultation involves making decisions through mutual discussion and seeking the opinion of the community. Implementing inclusive decision-making processes where diverse groups are represented can enhance legitimacy and trust in governance. The Shūrā (consultation) model can be implemented at local governance levels through community advisory councils, ensuring inclusivity.

3. **Accountability (Mas'ūliyyah):** Holding leaders accountable for their actions is essential in Islāmic governance. Establishing strong institutions to monitor and check the conduct of public officials can help combat corruption and misuse of power.

4. **Good Governance (Ḥusn at-Tadbīr):** Islamic teachings advocate for efficient and effective governance. Leaders should be competent, transparent, and committed to serving the public interest. Providing good public services and infrastructure can enhance stability.

5. **Peace and Reconciliation (Ṣulḥ):** Promoting peace and reconciliation through dialogue and negotiation is encouraged in Islām. Conflict resolution mechanisms should be established to address disputes and grievances peacefully.

6. **Social Justice ('Adālah 'Ijtimā'ayyah):** Reducing economic inequality and ensuring social justice are key to stability. Implementing social welfare programs and charitable activities, such as zakah (mandatory almsgiving), can help alleviate poverty and support vulnerable populations.

7. **Education (Ta'liim):** Promoting education and raising awareness about civic responsibilities can empower citizens and foster a culture of peace and tolerance. Education should include ethical and moral teachings derived from Islāmic principles.

8**. Unity (Waḥdah):** Islām encourages unity and brotherhood among believers. Fostering a sense of national unity and common identity can help bridge ethnic and religious divides that often fuel instability.

9. **Respect for Diversity ('Ikhtilāf):** Acknowledging and respecting diversity within the community is important. Islāmic teachings advocate for tolerance and coexistence among different groups, which can help manage ethnic and religious tensions.

10. **Rule of Law (Sharī'ah):** Adhering to the rule of law and ensuring that laws are just and applied equally to all citizens can enhance trust in the legal system and deter criminal behavior.

Implementing these principles requires a collaborative effort from religious leaders, government officials, civil society, and the broader community. While these Islāmic solutions provide a moral and ethical framework, practical and context-specific strategies must be developed to address the unique challenges facing Nigeria. Islāmic Studies, as an academic and educational discipline, can significantly impact political stability in various ways. Here's an analysis of its potential influence on political stability, particularly in the context of Nigeria:

Relationship between Islāmic Education and Political Stability in Nigeria

The relationship between Islāmic education and political stability in Nigeria is multifaceted and deeply rooted in the country's history, culture, and socio-political dynamics:

1. **Historical Context**

Colonial and Post-Colonial Legacy: Islāmic education has a long history in Nigeria, particularly in the northern regions. During colonial times, Islamic education coexisted with western-style education introduced by the British. Post-independence, the educational landscape continued to evolve, reflecting the diverse religious and cultural backgrounds of Nigeria's population.

2. **Educational Infrastructure**

Almajiri System: The Almajiri system, a traditional form of Islāmic education, has been a hallmark of education in Northern Nigeria for centuries. This system primarily focuses on religious instruction, often imparted by Islamic clerics (Mallams) in informal settings. While it preserves valuable cultural and religious traditions, the system has faced significant criticism for its lack of structure, minimal integration with formal education frameworks, and socio-economic challenges experienced by its students, known as *Almajirai*. These challenges include exposure to poverty, neglect, and, in some cases, exploitation. Recent efforts by the Nigerian government and non-governmental organizations have aimed to modernize and integrate the Almajiri system into the formal education system to address these issues and improve outcomes for the students (Maigari, 2010; Adebayo, 2013).

3. **Role in Social Cohesion**

   i. **Religious Identity:** Islāmic education helps to reinforce religious identity and values, which can contribute to social cohesion within Muslim communities. It provides a sense of belonging and continuity, which can be stabilizing factors in a politically diverse country.
   ii. **Madrassas and Islamic Schools:** These institutions offer not only religious education but also secular subjects, helping to bridge the gap between traditional and modern educational needs. They can play a role in promoting literacy and vocational skills, contributing to economic stability and social integration.

4. **Political Implications**

   i. **Islāmic Law:** In some northern states, the implementation of Sharī'ah law has been a point of political contention. While it reflects the desire to integrate Islāmic principles

into governance, it has also sparked debates about the role of religion in the state and the rights of non-Muslims.

ii. **Boko Haram Insurgency:** The extremist group Boko Haram has exploited the weaknesses in the educational system, particularly targeting western-style education. Their activities have severely disrupted education and contributed to instability in the region.

5. Government Policies and Initiatives

i. **Integration Efforts:** The Nigerian government has made efforts to integrate Islāmic education into the broader educational framework. Initiatives to modernize the Almajiri system and incorporate it into formal education aim to address issues of illiteracy and economic disparity, which are underlying factors in political instability.

ii. **Peace and Reconciliation Programs:** Various programs aimed at promoting interfaith dialogue and understanding between different religious communities can help mitigate tensions and foster a more stable political environment.

Challenges and Opportunities

Educational Disparities: Addressing disparities in access to quality education remains a challenge. Ensuring that Islāmic education complements rather than competes with secular education is crucial for holistic development.

Youth Empowerment: Providing youth with opportunities for education and employment through both Islāmic and secular channels can reduce susceptibility to radicalization and contribute to long-term political stability.

Islāmic education in Nigeria plays a significant role in shaping social and political dynamics. Its impact on political stability is influenced by how well it is integrated with national educational policies, how effectively it addresses socio-economic challenges, and how it contributes to fostering a sense of community and national identity.

Conclusion

The relationship between Islāmic education and political stability in Nigeria reflects the profound impact of education in shaping societal norms, fostering ethical governance, and promoting unity in diversity. Islāmic education, through its methodologies of *Tarbiyah*, *Taleem*, and *Tazkiyah*, offers a framework for holistic individual and societal development. Its focus on moral, spiritual, and intellectual growth that equips individuals with the virtues necessary to contribute positively to society, bridging the gaps created by religious, ethnic, and cultural diversity in Nigeria.

Despite its historical significance, the educational landscape in Nigeria faces challenges, including disparities in educational infrastructure, socio-economic inequalities, and political instability exacerbated by poor governance and ethnic tensions. The *Almajiri* system, while deeply rooted in Nigeria's northern regions, underscores the need for reforms that integrate Islāmic education into formal systems to address these disparities and ensure that education is both accessible and transformative.

This study identified Islāmic principles as vital tools for combating corruption, fostering justice, and ensuring accountability. Through justice (*Adl*), consultation (*Shūrā*), accountability (*Mas'ūliyyah*), and social justice (*'Adālah Ijtimā'iyyah*), Islamic teachings provide moral and ethical foundations for governance that align with the aspirations of a diverse and modern Nigeria. Additionally, Islamic concepts of unity (*Wahdah*) and respect for diversity (*'Ikhtilāf*) offer a framework for peacebuilding, fostering reconciliation, and nurturing a sense of shared national identity.

Ultimately, this work argues for an integrative approach where Islāmic education harmoniously coexists with Nigeria's secular educational policies to provide holistic growth and national development. The successful implementation of such integration will require the collaboration of religious leaders, educators, policymakers, and civil society to ensure that education is an effective tool for resolving conflicts, reducing inequalities, and nurturing ethical leadership. Through these efforts, Islāmic education can contribute significantly to a stable, just, and cohesive Nigeria, where the diverse populations are united by shared values and mutual respect.

This research contributes to the ongoing discourse on education's role in political stability, emphasizing how contextual application of Islāmic education principles can address specific societal challenges in Nigeria. By synthesizing historical insights with contemporary issues, it offers a roadmap for integrating religious values into broader educational and governance systems to promote sustainable peace and development.

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